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ABSTRACT

Since 1966 the librarians of the State University of New York (SUNY) have been working toward full faculty status for themselves on all 33 campuses. In that year the Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Libraries recommended: library titles equivalent to existing academic titles; a range of librarians' salaries equivalent to those in academic ranks; equivalent working months, with additional compensation for service beyond the academic year; full faculty voting power; and an appointments program and tenure equivalent to that of the faculty. The legislature approved only the voting and appointments measures, leaving the librarians in a "limbo" with academic rank but with salaries and titles in the existing administrative hierarchical structure. A SUNY librarians association was formed in 1969 to help promote the original recommendations to both the university and unions representing faculty. So far, however, the unions have been unable or unwilling to negotiate for the improvements desired by the librarians. (LS)

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FACULTY STATUS FOR LIBRARIANS IN THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, A SHORT HISTORY

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The promise of full faculty status at the 33 campuses of the State University of New York (SUNY) is the course along which librarians have been making their way since 1966. While some success can be cited, each achivement spawns new obstacles, causing wonder if "progress" is a description germane to the topic.

Concern for the status of SUNY librarians was first voiced publicly by the SUNY (Head) Librarians' Conference in April of 1966. Citing the recently revised Policies of the Board of Trustees of the State University of New York (Policies), and its complete neglect of librarians as academics, the Conference recommended the reactivation of the dormant Chancellor's Advisory Committee on Libraries to study the status of librarians in the University, and make recommendations on its findings. With the Chancellor's approval the Committee convened, and in October of the same year presented its findings in the form of a 'Memorandum' which recommended revision of the Policies to provide:

"1. That the term 'academic rank', as defined in Revised Policies of Board of Trustees, be redefined to include the following four librarian titles: Librarian, associate librarian, senior assistant librarian, assistant librarian.

2. That holders of these titles have rank equivalent, respectively, to holders of the following four existing academic titles: professor, associate professor, assistant professor, instructor.

3. That on each campus, appointments to and advances within, the four library ranks be made within the same range of salaries and NS (Non-Statutory) grade as may be specified for the corresponding instructional ranks.

4. That the annual professional obligation of librarians be the same as that of instructional appointees (e.g., two semesters, two trimesters, or three quarters according to the local pattern), with additional remuneration for service beyond the academic year, commensurate with that rewarded to instructional staff.

5. That provisions of Article X, Section 3, of Revised Policies of the Board of Trustees, be revised to establish equivalency of faculty voting power between professional librarians and instructional faculty.

6. That provisions of Article XI, Title A, of Revised Policies of the Board of Trustees, governing continuing appointments, be applied to librarians with appropriate modification respecting effective dated and requisite consecutive years of service in academic rank. In this connection, it is, of course, intended that continuing appointment would apply only to the librarians' academic rank--see (1) above --

not to his administrative assignment (e.g., Library Director, Chief of Technical Processes)."

The 'Memorandum' was and remains the credo of academic status for SUNY librarians: academic rank and salaries identical or equivalent to instructional faculty; academic year provisions; faculty voting privileges and tenurability.

The report was immediately referred by the Chancellor to the statewide SUNY Faculty Senate for its consideration, eventually landing in the Senate's Committee on Personnel Policies (CPP), where it languished in neglect. In June of 1967 the SUNY Librarians Conference, concerned with CPP's inaction, formed an Ad Hoc Committee on the Academic Status of Librarians to survey librarians' reactions to the 'Memorandum'. Not surprisingly, the response was an overwhelming endorsement of all recommendation for full faculty status. This survey, together with discussion between the Ad Hoc Committee and the CPP, helped stir the latter into action.

By November of 1967, the Faculty Senate received the CPP's resolution on librarians, a severe abridgement of the 'Memorandum' which did recommend academic rank for librarians, but identified only three titles (omitting senior assistant), and dropped all other recommendations except differential salaries in consideration of the 12 month work year. After Senate approval, these recommendations, shorn of salary differential, were passed by the Board of Trustees and became official policy. Thus, at the beginning of the fall semester 1968, all librarians in SUNY held academic rank with faculty privileges, and became eligible for consideration for tenured appointments.

It soon became apparent, however, that the wake created by the 'breakthrough' in faculty status in SUNY threatened to swamp its creators. Of the recommendations presented to the Chancellor, only items 5 and 6 were fully implemented; the first item partially; and the remainder not at all. Not only was the academic year missing, but faculty equivalency in title (four ranks) and salary as well.

SUNY librarians became faced with the unsettling prospect of academic rank which required review for tenured appointment after seven year service, as required of other academic-- but without benefit of a shortened work year in which to research, pursure studies, or publish. Here it might be pointed out that the academic year is possible for librarians, but only at the cost of 1/6 reduction in salary. Given the existing salaries for librarians and the onus of penalty implied by these provisions, few can either afford the loss in income or accept the principle of this option, although some do.

The Trustees' action also failed to release librarians from the administrative salary structure in which they had always found themselves. This combination of administrative assignments and academic appointments constitute the "both/and" status (known locally as "limbo") of SUNY librarians. That is, although incumbents in SUNY libraries are 'faculty' with academic rank, all library positions are classified in an administrative hierarchy of responsibilities, presently known as Professional Ranks (PR grades). It is this peculiar institution of "both/and" that makes librarians particularly vulnerable in the State University.

PR grades were the result of an otherwise commendable effort by the University and State to standardize levels of responsibility among public professional employees, previously classified in a more heterogeneous manner. All faculty had been released from such classification in 1965, but in 1968, when librarians joined the faculty ranks, they were denied this. When the PR grades were instituted in 1972/73, librarians pressed for the salary status of other faculty which would have freed the libraries of the University from the non-academic personnel structure. Failing this, the three grades given the majority of librarians (PR 1-3) were a devastating blow to morale and became an added force in the struggle for complete faculty status. Equally devastating was the discovery that approximately 80% of SUNY librarians has been assigned the lowest possible grade without benefit of appeal.

Salary provisions of the PR system are something of an exercise in administrative alchemy. Currently the salary of the PR 1 falls between $7,425 ('minimum') and $15,000 ('extraordinary maximum'), between which are such benchmarks as $11,250 ('mid-point') and $13,175 ('normal maximum'). Other PR grades have identical nomenclature for higher sums. Initial appointment as a professional librarian can be made at any point from 'minimum' to 'midpoint' 'Normal maximum' is the point to which salaries may rise through departmental raises, 'merit' and 'equity' awards, and across-the-board (negotiated) increases. 'Normal maximum' in the three PR grades for librarians are from $3,500 to nearly $9,000 below the maximum for other academics on the same calendar year. Between 'normal maximum' and 'extraordinary maximum', increases are allowed only through across-the-board gains or by permission of campus administration, i.e., are not within the jurisdiction of the library as an academic department. So, as a consequence of "both/and" status, self-determination as a department is proscribed for the library. Other than one salary maximum for each rank, and limited funds, no constraints exist for other faculty.

'Merit' and 'equity' awards are small percentages of the negotiated salary package earmarked to reward incentive and adjust inequities in salaries. They are awarded individuals by local campuses, usually upon recommendation from academic departments, and become a permanent increase in the recipient's salary. The sum for each campus is determined by its share of the total (statewide) faculty salary budget, and distribution is made under broad guidelines established for the entire University. Typical distribution at a local campus (Stony Brook) is made by academic department (of which the library is one), the department's sum determined by its percentage of total campus faculty salaries. Since higher echelons of library administration are not considered faculty in this tabulation, the showing of the library salaries, when compared with other academic departments, tends to be very modest.

Hence, it is allotted a small share of 'merit' and 'equity' monies. This is a particularly subtle form of discrimination, for only a elementary grasp of mathematics is required to deduce that 'equity' of this sort is, in fact, widening the gap between the salaries of librarians and other faculty. Compounded by salaries already below other faculty, 'merit' and 'equity' are not happy topics among librarians.

Another aspect of the 'both/and' status is exemplified by promotions. It is possible, and indeed customary, for a librarian to receive an academic promotion without comparable raise in salary or advancement in grade, causing confusion even for those being promoted. Under the double jeopardy of "both/and", meaningful promotion requires not only meeting the academic criteria for promotion, but petitioning the Director of the (State) Budget (DOB) for an upgrading of the position held by that person, raising it one or more PR grades. Under the provisions of Catch-22 however, job reclassification or up-grading cannot be justified to DOB on the basis of the merit or performance of the incumbent--it is, in fact, the same person doing the same job description, only better. This sort of chicken-egg reasoning has only proven that reclassification as presently conceived and practiced is not a promising solution to librarian problems.

Much of the movement toward faculty status to 1968 had been conducted by ad hoc library committees, meeting irregularly as needs arose. In the process, local associations were formed, and statewide organization was a logical sequence. Readers of LJ[1] and CRL News[2] in the spring of 1969 would have noted the birth announcement of the State University of New York Librarians Association.

SUNYLA remains today much as its founders provided: A policy making Council composed of the Associations' officers, one delegate from each SUNY campus library (including community colleges), and five category representatives--one each for university centers, four-year colleges, agricultural and technical colleges, community colleges and a final one for medical centers, specialized and statutory colleges.

The Association is the forum in which issues of professional concern are discussed, information exchanged, professional programs developed and personnel policies in SUNY libraries studied. Potential membership presently numbers about 430 among state-operated campuses (community colleges are administered locally). Dues paying membership currently numbers about 50% of those eligible. Throughout its brief history, SUNYLA has provided the State, bargaining agent, Chancellor, and Faculty Senate, among others, with authoritative information concerning libraries and librarians in a sprawling, heterogeneous, decentralized system where librarians' voices at local campuses are small, and where information is not always prompt, accurate, or forthcoming. By a combination of lobbying, explaining, debating, and on at least one occassion initiating a grievance against the University, SUNYLA has given voice and cohesion to librarians' aspirations in the system. As might be expected, the 'Memorandum' of the Chancellor's Library Committee retains the allegiance and efforts of SUNYLA members.

The appearance of SUNYLA was timely, for the Taylor Law permitting organization of public employees in New York was passed in 1967. Its effect in the University was delayed, however, until 1970 when the Senate Professional Association (SPA), a faculty Senate undertaking, emerged as the bargaining agent and negotiated the first contract (1971/73) for University professionals. In late 1972 NEA, with which SPA had been affiliated, and AFT merged in New York, resulting in a new bargaining agent for University professionals -- United University Professions. (UUP).

Librarians, designated as faculty for the purposes of collective bargaining, had reacted hopefully to unions during the formative years between Taylor Law enactment and the first official bargaining sessions. Ready with a cogent list of priorities, an articulate spokesman in SUNYLA, and professionals already experienced in the ways of University politics, librarians scrutinized prospective bargaining agents.

Each agent was asked to respond to librarians' pr orities--those unfulfilled recommendations of the Chancellor's Library Committee from the halcyon days of 1966. One of the favorites, SUFT (an AFT affiliate), was defeated in the first statewide balloting, and SPA was elected. In the first contract negotiations, no librarian issues were resolved. However, successive annual salary reopeners were permitted by the new contract, and under these auspices librarians were able to bring their problems before the University in discussions held in 1972. Possible resolution of some, if not all, issues was halted in 1973 with the merger of NEA and AFT and the subsequent formation of UUP. The immediate concern of UUP was membership drives and negotiation preparation in which the cause of librarians became lost.

Faced once again with presenting priorities for the 1974 negotiating sessions, librarians performed like a classic experiment in learned response: four ranks, off the PR grades; academic year. This was the message to UUP from SUNYLA, the Council of Head Librarians and the SUNY Faculty Senate Committee on Library Resources. But UUP, jealous of its prerogatives as bargaining agent, shunned the counsels of these library groups to appoint a committee of its own composed of three erstwhile members of librarian/University discussions held under the aegis of SPA. As negotiations of the new contract neared an end, and no report had been called for by the negotiating team from the UUP library committee, librarians became alarmed. In an incident which may be without precedent in labor annals, a group of concerned librarians descended upon their elected representatives and negotiators, demanding that their priorities be represented at the bargaining table. The assurances of UUP extracted at this confrontation bore little resemblence to the final terms of the contract, for, when the proposed contract saw light, coincidental with the 1974 Annual Meeting of SUNYLA in Buffalo, the document was innocent of reference to librarians. In an 11th hour appearance before the SUNYLA Meeting, the President and Chief Negotiator of UUP quite naturally defended their two year contract as the best that could be done, and when pressed, became emphatic that librarians would never number enough in the bargaining unit to warrant any priorities.

In the ensuing shock, librarians tended to divide between those who accepted these conditions, and those who were profoundly disillusioned. Two of the three members of the UUP library committee have since resigned membership in the union. In the final stages of a hurried ratification campaign, some librarians joined other dissidents in an unsuccessful attempt to defeat the present contract.

In the aftermath of this emotionally charged period, the continuing commitment of librarians to full faculty status was again registered when the SUNYLA Council at its November 1974 meeting established a labor relations committee, "Special Committee Number 1." In a statement which made emphatic the legitimate concern and involvement of professional organizations in the processes of collective bargaining, the Committee was charged with collecting and distributing any material germane to the collective bargaining of SUNY librarians, and with advising the general membership in the area of labor relations.

The timeliness of the Committee has since been proven by the almost simultaneous announcement that 'discussions' between UUP and the University on the conditions of librarians would begin anew. There is indeed reason to believe that the counsels of SUNYLA could again make a substantial contribution to the resources available to the discussants, if invited to do so. Such an invitation has yet to appear, either from UUP or the University which requested the present round of meetings.

In the conclusions of a 1968 article by other SUNY librarians,[3] the authors cited several causes for the poor status of academic librarians, among which were low self-esteem as professionals, lack of concern and support from institutional faculty, and the absence of support from the national professional organization. To this might be added, in SUNY at least, the dimension of collective bargaining which has altered the conditions of librarianship little since 1970, and indeed seems to be one more stumbling block to faculty status.

It would be a pleasure to add a hurried and happy postscript to this report, announcing that the present discussions between UUP and the University have resolved nearly 10 years' work by librarians. But, in fact, the "cautious optimism" voiced

by one librarian participating in those discussion has waned considerably, and no solution has appeared.

1. Library Journal, Vol. 94, no. 6, March 15, 1969. p. 1090

2. College and Research Libraries News, No. 3, March 1969. p. 1

3. Madan, Raj, Eliese Hetler and Marilyn Strong. "The Status of Librarians in Four-Year State Colleges and Universities." College and Research Libraries, Vol. 29, no. 5, September 1968. pp. 381-386.